

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Canceled)

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Canceled)

10. (Canceled)

11. (Canceled)

12. (Canceled)

13. (Canceled)

14. (Canceled)

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 13, wherein the~~ A method for identifying a flow, the method including:

receiving a request from a host for a flow identifier;

sending a flow identifier to the host;

receiving a packet with the flow identifier as the address, the packet having an Ethernet packet header and an Ethernet payload, the Ethernet header having an Ethernet source address and an Ethernet destination address, the Ethernet destination address being a first host address that is a virtual host address, the Ethernet payload having an Internet Protocol header and an Internet Protocol payload, and the Internet Protocol header having an Internet Protocol source address and an Internet Protocol destination address;

determining a second host address based upon the Internet Protocol destination address in the Internet Protocol header, and the second host address is being the address of a real host; host;
and

storing the second host address correlated with the first host address in a packet forwarding table.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [13,] 16, further including:
changing the Ethernet source address of the packet to be equal to the first host address;
changing the Ethernet destination address of the packet to be equal to the second host address; and
sending the packet.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[13,]]~~ 16, wherein the Ethernet payload has an Internet Protocol header and an Internet Protocol payload, wherein the Internet Protocol header has an Internet Protocol source address and an Internet Protocol destination address, and further including:

- determining ~~[[a]]~~ the second host address from ~~[[a]]~~ the packet forwarding table;
- changing the Ethernet source address of the packet to the first host address;
- changing the Ethernet destination address of the packet to the second host address; and
- sending the packet.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[1,]]~~ 16, wherein an incoming packet that has ~~[[a]]~~ the first host address as its destination address arrives at a port having a first port identifier, and wherein ~~[[a]]~~ the packet forwarding table correlates the first host address with a second port identifier; and further including rejecting the packet if the first port identifier is not equal to the second port identifier.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[1,]]~~ 16, ~~wherein the Ethernet payload has an Internet Protocol header and an Internet Protocol payload, wherein the Internet Protocol header has an Internet Protocol source address and an Internet Protocol destination address, and further including:~~

- determining a plurality of forwarding host addresses from ~~[[a]]~~ the packet forwarding table;
- changing the Ethernet source address of the packet to the first host address;
- creating a copy of the packet for each forwarding host address;
- changing the Ethernet destination address of each copy of the packet to a forwarding host address; and
- sending each copy of the packet.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein a forwarding host address is the address of a real host.

22. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein a forwarding host address is a virtual host address.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Canceled)

25. (Canceled)

26. (Canceled)

27. (Canceled)

28. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 24, wherein the host address is A~~
method for handling flows, the method including:

adding a virtual circuit flag to a packet, the packet having an Ethernet header and an Ethernet payload, the Ethernet header having an Ethernet source address and an Ethernet destination address, the Ethernet destination address being a virtual host address;

setting the value of the virtual circuit flag to indicate when the packet belongs to a flow and requests that the flow be recognized by the network;

determining the virtual circuit flag indicates a flow, replacing the Ethernet destination address with a real host address based on the Ethernet source address and the virtual host address, and replacing the Ethernet source address with the virtual host address; and

sending the packet to the real host address.

29. (Currently Amended) A method for establishing a virtual circuit for a flow, including:

forwarding a connection request datagram from a first host to a second host through a virtual host;

forwarding an accept message from the second host to the first host through the virtual host, ~~wherein~~ the accept message [is] being flagged as a virtual circuit establishment signal;

establishing a full duplex virtual circuit between the first host and the second host through the virtual host; and

forwarding a confirmation message from the first host to the second host over the virtual circuit.

Please add the following new claims:

30. (New) A method comprising:

receiving a packet with a virtual host destination address;

determining a next host destination address, if the packet is a first packet in a flow;

storing the virtual host destination address and the next host destination address as a correlated pair in a packet forwarding table, if the packet is the first packet in the flow; and

forwarding the packet to the next host destination address specified in the packet forwarding table for the virtual host destination address.

31. (New) The method of claim 30 wherein determining a next host destination comprises:

determining the next host destination address based on a source host destination address in the packet.

32. (New) The method of claim 30 wherein determining a next host destination comprises:

determining the next host destination address based on a source host destination address in the packet and the virtual host address.

33. (New) The method of claim 30 wherein forwarding the packet to the next host destination address comprises:

moving the virtual host destination address from a destination address field to a source address field in the packet;

moving the next host destination address into the destination address field from the packet forwarding table; and

sending the packet to the next host destination address.